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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5775
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE
RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0333
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0379
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 0533
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0343
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RHMFIS/CDR USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NOUAKCHOTT 001027

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TAGS: PINR PREL PGOV PHUM EAID KPAO MR
SUBJECT: GOVERNMENT TO REOPEN VOTER LISTS IN SEPTEMBER

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 409

Classified By: CDA Steven Koutsis, Reasons 1.4(b)(d)

(C) Summary

-- The transitional government has announced that it will reopen the voter lists in September to allow additional voters to register for the November elections.

-- However, the government has made no announcement about efforts to resolve ID card issuance problems detected during the past voter registration drive (reftel).

-- The government has also officially set the date for the municipal and legislative elections for November 19 and the runoffs for November 26, and has said it will use the single ballot system for all future elections.

-- At present the transitional government has no plans to fund political campaigns prior to elections, and it is unknown whether national NGOs will be accredited to observe elections.

(C) Comments

-- The government's decision to reopen the voter lists before the November elections (to allow thousands of additional Mauritanians to register to vote), came following months of pressure from this and other embassies.

-- While the government's actions are largely procedural, they signify an additional and important step in the transition toward democratic, civilian rule.

End Summary and Comments.

¶1. (U) The transitional government has announced a series of procedural steps in preparation for the coming municipal and legislative elections. The announcements, made through military council decree and Ministry of Interior authority, formalize much of what the transitional government has already promised.

REOPENING OF THE VOTER LISTS

¶12. (U) The Ministry of Interior announced that it will reopen the voter registration process during the entire month of September, allowing new voters to be added to the voter lists for the November elections. The government had planned to reopen these lists in January, before the March presidential elections but had expressed reluctance about reopening them before November. This move will likely add thousands of additional voters to the lists which currently number 989,664 registered voters.

¶13. (C) The September voter registration process will be open to all Mauritanians 18 years and above with a valid national ID card. The Ministry of Interior has made no announcement about efforts to resolve ID card issuance problems detected during the past voter registration drive (reftel).

ADDITIONAL ELECTORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

¶14. (U) The government officially set the dates for the municipal and legislative elections for November 19, with a runoff one week later on November 26. As the runoff will consist of the top two vote-getters from any race where a majority of votes were not won, it is expected that the outcome of many races will not be known until after the November 26 runoff.

¶15. (U) Independent candidates and political parties with voter lists may submit their candidacy for the municipal

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elections between September 20 and 30, and for legislative elections between November 3 and 18.

¶16. (U) The government has also announced that a unique ballot format will be used for all coming elections: municipal, legislative, and presidential.

WHAT ISN'T KNOWN?

¶17. (U) While many questions have been resolved, others remain unanswered, including whether the government will fund political campaigns prior to elections (they currently plan only to reimburse parties after elections) and whether civil society organizations will be accredited to observe elections (they were refused accreditation during the referendum).
Koutsis